

**CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY  
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**ADOPTED MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>**

**Thursday November 18, 1999  
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

**Embassy Suites Resort, Mandalay Beach  
Oxnard, CA**

**In Attendance:**

**GOVERNMENT SEATS**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**  
Member Mark Helvey

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
Member James Shevock  
Alternate Gary Davis

**US COAST GUARD**  
Alternate Mike Hamerski

**MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE**  
Member Drew Mayerson

**US NAVY**  
Member Alex Stone  
Alternate Ron Dow

**COUNTY OF VENTURA**  
Alternate Jack Peveler

**COMMUNITY SEATS**

**TOURISM**  
Member Michael Finucan  
Alternate Alex Brodie

**RECREATION**  
Member Jim Brye  
Alternate Tony Gibbs

**BUSINESS**  
Member Rudy Scott

**FISHING**  
Member Bruce Steele

**EDUCATION**  
Member Dave Long  
Alternate Larry Manson

**RESEARCH**  
Alternate Matthew Cahn

**CONSERVATION**  
Member Linda Krop

**AT-LARGE**  
Member Craig Fusaro, Ph.D., Chair  
Alternate Mick Kronman

**AT-LARGE**  
Member Marla Daily

**NON-VOTING SEATS**

**Channel Islands National Marine  
Sanctuary**  
Member LCDR Edward Cassano  
Alternate LCDR Matthew Pickett

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes adopted by Sanctuary Advisory Council on March 15, 2000.

**Not attending:**

**BUSINESS**

Alternate Dr. Dan Secord

**FISHING**

Alternate Chris Williams

**RESEARCH**

Member Leal Mertes, Ph.D.

**CONSERVATION**

Alternate Peter Howorth

**AT-LARGE**

Member Jean-Michel Cousteau

Alternate Barry Schuyler

**AT-LARGE**

Alternate Dr. Jeff Auerbach

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

Alternate Korie Johnson

**US COAST GUARD**

Member Lt. Yuri Graves

**MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

Alternate Fred Piltz

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

Member Patricia Wolf

Alternate Lt. Jorge Gross

**CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY**

Member Brian Baird

Alternate Melissa Miller-Henson

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

Member Gary Timm

Alternate Jack Ainsworth

**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

Member Dianne Meester

Alternate Jackie Campbell

**COUNTY OF VENTURA**

Member Lyn Krieger

**NON-VOTING SEATS**

**MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARY**

William Douros, Superintendent

**GULF OF THE FARALLONES/CORDELL  
BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES**

Ed Ueber, Manager

**1. Administrative Items and Announcements**

**A. Call To Order and Roll Call**

**B. Special Announcements and Introductions**

LDCR Matt Pickett, the current Sanctuary Assistant Manager, will take over as the next Sanctuary Manager in March, 2000.

**Introduction of New Tourism Seat Member and Alternate**

Michael Finucan of Hornet Sport Fishing will hold the SAC member seat for Tourism.  
Alex Brodie of Island Packers will hold the alternate seat for Tourism.

### **C. Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 22, 1999**

The July 22 meeting minutes were approved with no suggested changes. The minutes will be posted on the Sanctuary's website as well as made available in hard copy upon request.

### **D. SAC Vice-Chair Election**

Mick Kronman and Linda Krop nominated Dianne Meester for the SAC Vice-Chair officer position. **By unanimous approval by acclaim, Dianne Meester was reelected as the SAC's Vice-Chair.**

## **2. Committee Reports**

### **A. Marine Reserves Working Group**

The marine reserves process update was covered separately later in the meeting.

### **B. Education working group/MERA**

Dave Long, the Council representative to the Education Working Group/MERA, read an article on the Jason Project, a year-round scientific expedition designed to excite and engage students in science and technology and to motivate and provide professional development for teachers. It has been praised as the leader in distance-learning programs and is a national project giving everyone the opportunity to be involved with underwater exploration, including its development and purpose. Laura Francis, the former Education Coordinator for CINMS, also discussed the Jason Project. The Project's focus this year is on extreme environments and space, including undersea habitats. The Jason Project will be coming to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum in March. Shauna Bingham of CINMS, will participate in the Jason Project's teacher workshops.

Dave Long also mentioned the National Marine Sanctuary Program's recent retreat to Santa Cruz Island for Sanctuary Education Coordinators retreat, noting that Julie Goodson of CINMS attended. Additionally, MERA recently held a workshop of 20 or so members at El Capitan.

Dave Long also suggested a possible MERA workshop for a future SAC meeting. Finally, Dave reported on the construction progress for the new Cabrillo High School Aquarium in Lompoc, noting that it should be completed at the end of February.

### **C. Research Working Group/RAP**

Matthew Cahn reported that the Research Working Group is not working now, but will probably start after the marine reserves process concludes. They are currently focusing primarily on the Marine Reserve Science Panel. After the Science Panel concludes its work on marine reserves, the research group will formally meet and address issues beyond the topic of reserves.

#### **D. Fishing Working Group**

There was no update given for this group. Neither Bruce Steele (Fishing Working Group chair) nor Chris Williams (SAC Fishing seat alternate) was present at that time.

#### **E. Military Working Group**

Ron Dow reported that Military Working Group membership is currently being coordinated. Ron is talking to DOD organizations. The DOD's Regional Environmental Coordinator (REC) will help coordinate environmental issues, and will be helpful for the formation of the group.

#### **F. Conservation Working Group (Linda Krop)**

Linda Krop, chair of the Conservation Working Group, reported that the group's first meeting was held on October 27. At the meeting, the Sanctuary staff presented reviews of the Sanctuary, the SAC/Working Groups, and the Management Plan. Attendance was lower than anticipated; however, this could have been due to other events that were occurring on the same night. Their next meeting is planned for January 18, and will focus on the management plan. Ed Cassano reminded everyone that the CINMS website now has a SAC Working Group information page.

### **3. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments at this time.

### **4. Manager's Report (Ed Cassano)**

#### **Resource Protection/Policy/Permits**

##### Marine Reserves

This will be covered in detail at the SAC meeting later on.

##### Salvage of the F/V *Margaret O*

The *Margaret O* was successfully raised and towed out of Sanctuary waters on October 11<sup>th</sup> and delivered to Ventura Harbor.

Vandenberg AFB site visit. In November, Ed Cassano and Anne Walton met with Walt Schobel, operations manager, and the Environmental Division team, at Vandenberg Air Force Base. This team included their safety officer, NEPA attorney and flight operations officer. Ed and Anne briefed the Vandenberg team on the management plan review process. Much of the discussion was based on the need for consultation, launch procedures, launch impacts, permitting requirements, safety procedures and possibly formalizing our relationship through an MOA. Walt Schobel and staff will meet with CINMS staff in early January in Santa Barbara.

Permits. CINMS is in the process of issuing the first two permits of Fiscal Year 2000. The first is a continuation of research that began in 1998 by SCRIPPS and the Navy. The activity will include sediment core and Van Veen grab samples as well as the discharge of bathythermographs. The second permit will be issued to Nicolas Pinter of the Southern Illinois University and his colleagues from UCSB and Columbia University. From January 3-7, 2000, he will be conducting gravity core samples of stacked delta complexes around the Northern Channel Islands. The research team hopes to uncover some new information about prehistoric glacial periods such as conditions that may have ended the Ice Age.

Sea Otters. Julie Goodson attended the Marine Mammal commission hearing in Monterey along with other Sanctuary Program staff. The discussion of otters and their migration within the otter management area was an issue of high interest. CINMS participation at the hearing was coordinated with other Sanctuary Program representatives.

Global Photon Cable Project. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Global West fiber optic cable installation project was recently released for public review. Global Photon's proposed project is a north-south marine cable beginning in San Francisco, with landfalls every 150 miles, including two within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The cable route also passes through a small portion of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary between Anacapa Island and the mainland. Monterey Bay NMS is taking the lead on oversight of this project for the National Marine Sanctuary Program.

Copies of the Executive Summary of the DEIR are available from the Sanctuary. A downloadable version of the complete DEIR is available from the website of the State Lands Commission at: <http://www.slc.ca.gov/>.

Several questions and much Council discussion about cable projects ensued. It was suggested that a future SAC meeting might include a briefing from Global Photon, and/or an agency-based panel presentation/workshop on this topic.

### **Research Activities**

Pilot Study to Engage the Commercial Fishing Community in Sanctuary Research and Resource Management. Ed Cassano reported that CINMS is developing a pilot project to establish a new process for stakeholder participation in Sanctuary resource assessment. The project is based on facilitation of a partnership between resource agencies (NOAA's CINMS, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Region, and the California Department of Fish and Game's Southern Marine Region), the commercial fishing community and the marine research community to formulate a sound, community-based resource monitoring strategy in the CINMS. This is an effort to link local resource users to the Sanctuary's ongoing ecosystem monitoring program and, ideally, to enhance their sense of ownership to the resource and the importance of conservation.

Ed commented that he foresees the actual research project design being developed by these partnering entities through a series of collaborative workshops to be funded and facilitated through the CINMS program. Upon finalization of project design, appropriate training and implementation of a 1-year pilot study will take place. Expansion of the project's scope and duration will be dependent upon the success of the pilot study. The data collected will be used

by the CINMS program to ascertain Sanctuary site characterizations, to contribute to and cross-validate ongoing monitoring surveys, and possibly to identify ecosystem trends and/or specific problems that require further attention or study.

This pilot project is funded at level of \$300,000 a year for three years. It is currently in a conceptual phase now, and will hopefully be up and running by March or April, 2000. The project will require a steering committee made up of members from NMFS, DFG, CINMS, university researchers, and commercial fisherman. It will also require a very structured training program and good quality control. Alex Brodie and Mike Finucan both commented that CINMS should include sport fishing and charter representation in the project. Marla suggested that a program director should be hired for this pilot project.

Side Scan Sonar Work. Ed reported that CINMS and USGS conducted two-weeks of side scan sonar work aboard the Ballena. Most of the work was done around the Vandenberg Reserve, although several days were also spent around the northern islands completing areas mapped on previous cruises.

Sustainable Seas Expedition. CINMS has begun to prepare a cruise plan for the SSE 2000 expedition. Next year's mission will be considerably longer than the first expedition - 25 days versus 10 - which will allow for the accomplishment a great deal of research and education activities.

Mick Kronman suggested that May might not be a good month for SSE. Ed Cassano replied that he is trying to change the month.

Marine Mammal Conference. The Channel Islands NMS, along with the Gulf of the Farallones, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale, and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, will be sponsoring a workshop on November 28th at the International Marine Mammal conference. The workshop is being held to review and promote marine mammal research and monitoring in the twelve National Marine Sanctuaries. The workshop will bring together National Marine Sanctuary Managers, Research Coordinators and marine mammalogists conducting research in Sanctuary waters.

## **GIS Update**

Effective November 8, Ben Waltenberger has joined the CINMS staff as a permanent full-time Spatial Data Analyst.

CINMS received a CalComp plotter (for mapping) courtesy of Channel Islands National Park.

## **Cultural Resources Activities**

Ed reported that the annual shipwreck reconnaissance cruise was conducted aboard the "Pacific Ranger" from October 11th - 14th. This is a cooperative effort represented by CINMS, CINP and Coastal Maritime Archaeology Resources (CMAR), an avocational archaeology group. The

trip was successful, with video and still photography taken of the many cultural and historic resources.

Ed also reported that an underwater film team that includes Michael deGruy, who has completed projects for National Geographic and Discovery Channel, is scheduled to film the submerged site of the shipwreck "Cuba" located off Point Bennett, San Miguel Island.

## **NMSA Reauthorization and NMSP Appropriation**

### Appropriation

Congress has still not made budget decisions. NOAA and the Sanctuary Program is operating under a continuing resolution. The Sanctuary Program is included in one of the last appropriation bills. Because it was vetoed a few times prior, there have been some negotiations taking place. Recent word is that the NMSP may be slated for an increase of up to \$26 million.

### Reauthorization

Since the last SAC meeting on October 5, there has been no news of further development on reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. At last word, the Senator Snowe's Bill was being considered in Committee. To review this bill and track updates to the process, refer to the following web site: [www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/news/newsbboard/newsbboard.html](http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/news/newsbboard/newsbboard.html)

Mick Kronman asked whether anyone else was receiving an e-mail called "Just a Story." It is a hypothetical story about a reauthorized NMS Act and an enforcement scenario. Ed commented that some rumors about new proposed enforcement authorities have been false, noting that provisions he has seen are designed to protect an enforcement officer if he/she is interfered with while trying to enforce the Sanctuary Act. Ed also noted that CINMS has provided the Council with a packet of the various proposed reauthorization bills and comparison tables, and suggested using the NMSP web site to track developments.

## **5. Management Plan Review Process**

### **A. Management Plan Retreat Report**

Anne Walton gave a slide presentation on the SAC management plan retreat to Santa Cruz Island held on October 5-6, 1999.

SAC members and alternates that attended the retreat included: Jeff Auerbach, Brian Baird, Jim Brye, Jackie Campbell, Marla Daily, Gary Davis, Ron Dow, Craig Fusaro, Yuri Graves, Mike Hamerski, Korie Johnson, Linda Krop, Drew Mayerson, Jack Peveler, Alex Stone, and Patty Wolf. The objectives of the Retreat were to:

- Build a working relationship between SAC and CINMS staff
- Information exchange
- Establish feedback loop on an on-going basis
- Build a team to work on the management plan (SAC subcommittee)

- Let the SAC know how much Sanctuary staff appreciate all the time and effort the Council has focused on the Sanctuary.

Anne reviewed draft Vision Statement outlines that were presented by Sanctuary staff for each of the Management Plan program areas. These program areas included: Overall management plan, Education and Outreach, Research, GIS, Cultural Resources, Policy, Enforcement, and the SAC.

Anne concluded the presentation by summarizing the advice generated at the retreat, as follows:

Education and Outreach Suggestions:

- Partner with USCG Auxiliary to distribute water quality brochures
- Expand MERA partners to include: Ventura County and L.A. County, i.e. Ventura and Oxnard Comm. Colleges, CSUCI, and SWMEA
- CINMS Website:
  - Add a section into the Alolkooy on how to access the website
  - Put the website address in all brochures
- Wider distribution area for publications
- Update pinniped brochure
- Presentation – Design a scripted package
- Increase public outreach presentations

Research Suggestions:

- We should clearly link research efforts to management issue
- To assure we are asking the right questions
- To determine when we have “enough” information
- To assure data are analyzed at some point
- We should work hard to communicate our efforts to:
  - Other researchers
  - The public
- Lots of feedback on possible partnerships  
e.g. Navy, NASA, Conception Coast Project, etc...

Cultural Resources Suggestions:

- Heighten public awareness
  - Establish mooring systems at submerged sites
    - \* Provide notice to site visitors of regulations
    - \* Prevent vessel anchoring on sensitive sites
    - \* Allows law enforcement with visual reference of sites to enhance protection
    - \* Highlight visitor presence at sites
- Engage public awareness
  - provide videotape highlighting the history of resources and visitor protocol
  - presentations for commercial dive-boat operators and sport diving community
  - provide laminated shipwreck underwater maps for site visitors “historic trail”
  - shipwreck exhibits Santa Barbara Maritime Museum
  - shipwreck workshop



- Locate and inventory cultural and historic resources
  - Joint agency remote sensing surveys to locate new sites
  - Engage the assistance of commercial and sport diving community to locate new sites
  - Hire permanent Cultural Resources Coordinator

Policy Suggestions:

- Coordinate and maximize opportunities with other agencies
- Prioritize policy areas/issues
- Broaden and strengthen policy outreach and development through SAC and other groups
- Develop resource protection messages/policies for the public; educate
- Topical workshops at SAC meetings

Enforcement Suggestions:

- Strong need for boater outreach
  - Better representation of CINMS on charts and maps
- USCG ride-alongs with CINMS
- Aerial Program
  - Higher political profile for aerial program
  - Increase surveillance of cultural sites
  - Research overflight zoning

Sanctuary Advisory Council Suggestions:

- Outreach
  - work through SAC to increase and enhance public visitation to the Sanctuary
- Planning and Priorities
  - Management Plan and Marine Reserves processes should guide SAC priorities
  - Assure priority of SAC issues match manager's needs
  - SAC to be less scattered and reactive to issues
  - Need to revisit Sanctuary overview:
    - \* SAC to clearly understand the Sanctuary (mission, role, programs, Act, etc...)
    - \* Bring all SAC members to the same page
- Meetings:
  - set dates consistently through the year
  - provide more detail on agendas
  - provide adequate time for agenda items
  - be clear about items that require Council action
  - don't let discussions wander too far off point
  - be mindful of public's role at meetings

**B. Management Plan Process update**

**B1. PRESENTATION by Mike McGinnis** on Ecosystem Linkages in the Marine Environment from Cambria to Point Mugu, including the Northern Channel Islands.

Mike McGinnis had six weeks to do the study. This presentation reflects the opinions of Mike McGinnis, not the CINMS.

[Copies of the overheads are available upon request from the CINMS]

*Summary of Report One* – Identification and Synthesis of Biological and Physical Published Data on the Marine Environment from Cambria to Pt. Mugu, including the Northern Channel Islands

This report identifies and synthesizes published biological and physical information that was gathered for the northern Channel Islands region (hereafter referred to as the region), which includes the coastal area between Cambria and Pt. Mugu, the Santa Barbara Channel and the southern California islands of Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel. There exists no published synthesis and/or analysis of this information. This report represents an initial step to identify, analyze and interpret the nearly 30 years of biological and physical information on or related to the region.

*Summary of Report Two* – Ecosystem Linkages in the Marine Environment from Cambria to Point Mugu, including the Northern Channel Islands

The purpose of the report is to assist the CINMS to identify a study area from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the Management Plan. Based on issues described in scoping hearings held in the Summer 1999, the CINMS is considering four alternative study areas: 1) existing Sanctuary boundaries, 2) from Point Mugu to Cambria (southern boundary of Monterey Bay sanctuary), 3) from Point Mugu to Point Sal, and 4) from Point Mugu to Point Conception.

Based on an evaluation of the published information on the ecological links in the region, the report recommends Alternative #3, from Point Mugu to Point Sal, as the study area. The offshore area from Point Mugu to Point Sal includes three prominent biogeographical provinces (the cold- and warm- water provinces and the transition zone), coastal ecosystems and habitats on the mainland that affect marine life in the region, and diverse faunal regimes of the marine and coastal systems.

*Recommendation and General Summary of Report*

Alternative #3, from Point Mugu to Point Sal is recommended as the study area for the following reasons:

- The offshore area between Point Conception is described as an important transition area in the region, (Horn and Allen 1978)
- However, information from Murray and Littler (1981) among others suggests that the boundary of Point Conception may be less important than previously described. A large change attributed to climate variation occurred in the intertidal flora and fauna north of Point Conception (in central California), with many southern species now dominating the community (Barry et al. 1995). This change includes a shift in species composition toward warmer-living forms, apparently as a result of increases in sea surface temperature over the 60-year period ending in 1994.

- Information on field observations and studies of the abundance of fishes, birds, marine mammals and coastal ecosystems on Vandenberg Air Force Base and the Mugu Lagoon support the recommendation of the coastal mainland areas of Point Mugu to Point Sal. These coastal ecosystems are essential to marine birds (such as the Brown Pelican), fishes (such as groundfish) and pinnipeds.
- Point Mugu is the east entrance to the Santa Barbara Channel (an important transition area that includes cold- and warm-water masses) while Point Mugu basin is a major “sand trap” in the transport of sand in the Channel.
- Drawing the boundary north of Point Sal would capture more of the coldwater biogeography that San Miguel Island is embedded in.
- The SB Channel should be included in the study area because it is a representation of two marine biogeographical provinces, the cold- and warm-water masses, and the transition zone. Abiotic and biotic factors associated with eddies in the SB Channel may be important in the distribution, recruitment and survival of pelagic juvenile fishes and other marine organisms.
- Nearshore waters along the mainland include the presence of habitats (such as kelp forests) that are used by a number of marine species of the region (e.g., marine fishes, Cross and Allen 1993: 506-517). They are also important nursery areas for fishes and other marine life.

Ed Cassano clarified the scope of work CINMS gave Mike McGinnis – he was asked only to study the ecological linkages.

Comments:

A member of the public wanted to know how harvesting is accounted for in the study. Mike stated that causes of ecosystem disturbance were not included in his report.

Bruce Steele asked if the data used for the study considered a long enough time scale. The scope of the study is from the 1950’s to the present. Bruce suggested that it could be possible that there has been two different ecosystem regime shifts over a longer period of time. Although the recent data may look drastic, it may just be a natural cycle. Mike replied that the strongest data dates from the 1950’s and he questions what is natural. He believes that natural is different to different scientists.

Dave Long asked if there were one or two indicators that show change taking place within the Sanctuary. Mike stated that according to McGowan and others, productive capacity (self-production) is in decline and that this is a long-term trend. It is unsustainable from the euphotic zone. Bruce Steele commented that the study was missing a huge amount of archeological data that show biotic shifts. Mike reminded him that he only had a few weeks to complete this study.

Craig Fusaro commented that words like “decline” or “disturbance” are usually interpreted as causative words, but in actuality, there are a variety of driving factors and some of them are long-term.

Linda Krop was concerned with the process of determining a study area, who reviews the draft and makes the study area decision and how does the SAC participate. Anne Walton responded that In terms of the review, the widest area possible is first determined, but it still needs to go through a political and practical cut. The CINMS staff makes the final decision, but before that is made, CINMS will expand Mike's contract, go through another draft, open it to peer/SAC review via the list-serve, and produce a new document.

## **B2. Next Steps in the Management Plan Process**

Anne Walton reported that a CINMS team would be sent D.C. to present major issues to headquarters. This is necessary to gain clearance to start on the DEIS. A study area for the DEIS will also need to be finalized.

## **B3. Management Plan Budget Request and Status**

Anne reported that the expected total management plan budget for fiscal year 2000 is \$710,000 (including the MRWG process). Of this,

- 193,000 will come out of the CINMS base budget (30% of the base budget) for site labor, contract, supplies, and cooperative agreements.
- \$517,000 will come from unallocated reserves for MRWG, workshops, and DEIS

Anne also noted that costs will change depending on the study area selected. Anne expects to know more about the budget in January, pending the outcome of Congressional appropriations to the NMSP.

Additional Comments:

Bruce Steele, returning to the Management Plan vision outlines, commented that he does not agree that "human impacts" are always the greatest threat to the marine environment. He posed the question: where does sub-sea alteration fit into the Vision Statements? Ed Cassano explained that the Vision Statements presented were only drafts, and will be reworked.

A member from the public, Jim Roch, warned to beware of making the centerpiece of the management plan focus on people as the problem, but rather put a more positive spin on it.

## **B4. Proposed SAC Management Plan Subcommittee**

After much discussion about ways the SAC might assist with the Management Plan revision process, the general consensus of the SAC was that instead of designating a small group of SAC members to serve as a Management Plan Subcommittee (as was discussed at the last SAC meeting), the Council would prefer the entire SAC become more focused on the Management Plan.

**Therefore, a Management Plan subcommittee was not formed at this meeting.**

To allow the entire SAC to get directly involved in the Management Plan revision process, it was suggested that future SAC meetings be streamlined to allow for priority focus on the Management Plan revision and the Marine Reserves process.

To accommodate an increased focus on the Management Plan, several ideas were suggested that met with general approval of the Council:

- SAC meetings will be focused on the management plan, providing large blocks of time for working sessions
- A call for reviews will be sent out to the SAC when the Sanctuary needs input on sections of the draft management plan or the draft EIS, or other products of the process
- Membership of any management plan subcommittee should be dynamic to allow all Council members to participate if/when interested
- To be productive between SAC meetings, e-mail will be utilized (the SAC list-serv) along with the CINMS web site to distribute documents for review and transmit comments
- We will consider scheduling additional SAC meetings, as needed, perhaps on months without scheduled SAC meetings and with shorter meeting times (half-day?)

## **6. Marine Reserves Process**

### **A. Jurisdictional Role and Regulatory Authority of the National Marine Sanctuary Program and the CINMS with respect to the establishment of Marine Reserves**

CINMS Assistant Manager Matt Pickett handed out two pages from a report on jurisdictions within the CINMS, which was produced by the Sanctuary and provided to SAC members earlier in the year. The SAC was asked if the handout was sufficient to describe Sanctuary's jurisdiction with respect to fisheries management. The handout included the following statement:

"The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) does not regulate commercial or recreational fisheries. These fisheries are regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game within state waters, and the National Marine Fisheries Service in federal waters. The CINMS works cooperatively with these agencies to facilitate and coordinate resource protection within the CINMS."

Discussion and questions were brought forth, but there was not enough time to discuss matters fully and complete the agenda item. The discussion was then tabled.

### **B. Marine Reserve Working Group (MRWG) activities (Ed Cassano)**

Ed reported that the MRWG has held two meetings since the last SAC meeting. The first meeting's objective was to adopt a set of ground rules. The second meeting's objective was to discuss the fears and apprehensions of the MRWG members regarding marine reserves. The MRWG has identified draft lists of key elements for a marine reserve. The MRWG will work on the development of goals and objectives and draft questions for the Science Panel at their next meeting, slated for December 9. They are pushing for the completion of the process by June 2000.

Craig Fusaro highlighted the consensus approach adopted by the MRWG. Craig read sections of the MRWG groundrules, including the definition of consensus and the mechanism for reaching consensus.

### **C. Marine Reserves Science Panel**

Matt Cahn, SAC Research seat alternate and Science Panel Chair, reported that the Science Panel has met once so far. The Science Panel is currently waiting for the goals and objectives of the MRWG. Matt believes that June 2000 is an optimistic date and that this may not allow a sufficient amount of time for the science panel to perform its duties.

### **D. Marine Reserves Socio-Economic Study**

Sean Hastings gave a very brief review on the status of the Socio-Economic Study. Sean reported that NOAA Economists Bob Leeworthy and Peter Wiley had been encountering some data gaps, and are in need of assistance to locate additional data sources.

## **7. Council Member Announcements**

This agenda item was skipped due to a lack sufficient time.

## **8. An informational presentation on Sea Otters by The Otter Project and Friends of the Sea Otter**

### **The Otter Project**

Steve Shimek of The Otter Project expressed that his intention in presenting to the SAC was to acquaint Council members with the ramifications of the return of the sea otter to the Santa Barbara Channel and eventually the Channel Islands. He believes that the return of the sea otter is a positive force as we move towards a healthier ecosystem, and sustainable fisheries. According to Mr. Shimek, the sea otter's range appears to be expanding and although the occasional appearance of a female pup is seen on the mainland south of Point Conception, they have no permanent occupation. What is strange, he noted, is that the range is expanding at the same time the population is declining. The Otter Project does not know why this is happening. Otter populations could, perhaps, be similar to trying to stack marbles – given time, the population will tend to spread out regardless of density. Several causes have been attributed to the declining population of sea otters; however, most biologists agree that food availability is not the problem. While some otters seem to have died of emaciation, this is not a dominant cause of death. Further, the otters in California seem to spend relatively little time foraging in comparison to populations assumed to be at carrying capacity. In California, sea otters spend between 17 to 38 percent of their time foraging and 50 to 68 percent of their time resting. Sea otter populations at carrying capacity (Amchitka Island, AK) spend 51 to 58 percent of their time foraging and 32 to 34 percent of their time resting.

When otters return, the Otter Project expects that the urchin and abalone fisheries will no longer be viable. They will be displaced. But this does not represent the demise of commercial fishing

in the Santa Barbara Channel or Channel Islands. Just the opposite, the Otter Project believes that sea otters represent a positive change towards sustainable fisheries.

According to the Otter Project, the sea otter is a keystone species. They know from a variety of studies that the sea otter is the textbook example of a keystone species, in other words, the sea otter structures its environment. The Otter Project believes that the sea otter increases diversity and primary productivity. They also believe that if one is concerned about the diversity of the rainforest, you should be concerned about the diversity of our kelp forests. If one is concerned about the productivity of America's farms, again one should be concerned about the productivity of our kelp forests. A kelp bed with sea otters is three-times more productive than an urchin barrens.

Steve also addressed the relationship between sea otters, urchins, and abalone. He stated that there is a large body of research that shows sea otters cause dramatic declines in urchins and abalone. Moreover, there is research that shows that declines in urchins and abalone results in increases in abundance of kelp. More research provides the bridge and shows that sea otters increase the abundance of kelp. As we grapple with the issues of sustainable fisheries, the Otter Project believes that we need to place extremely high value on two attributes of healthy ecosystems: primary productivity and diversity. The Otter Project believes that the sea otter restores healthy ecosystems.

Steve reported that according to the California Sea Grant Report, "California's Living Marine Resources and their Utilization," the following Rockfish species will directly benefit from more abundant and healthier kelp forests:

Blue  
Kelp  
Olive  
Vermillion  
Bocaccio  
Chilipepper  
Copper  
Black and Yellow  
Gopher  
Grass

Studies done in Alaska show that there is an increase in abundance of kelp related species in areas occupied by sea otters. A study published in 1988 looked at the return of the sea otter to Avila Beach between 1976 and 1980. The study compared the nearshore community structure before and after the otter's return. As is predicted by the preponderance of research, urchin and abalone numbers declined. Kelp increased. Fishes increased. This same researcher removed and excluded urchins from a Naples Reef, north of Santa Barbara and kelp came back. Over the past two years, the otters have heavily foraged Cojo Anchorage just south of Point Conception. Steve had heard from a number of sources that the kelp bed there is the thickest and healthiest anyone can remember.

The Otter Project believes that sea otters help restore diversity, productivity, and health to our nearshore. They also believe that otters are not a threat to sustainable fisheries, but are part of the solution and are an important biological component to the Santa Barbara Channel and the Channel Islands.

### **Friends of the Sea Otter (Don Mooney)**

Don Mooney stepped the Council through a 22 page report/statement document that he had distributed to the SAC. His main points consisted of the following:

- The California sea otter represents the missing thread in the rich tapestry of marine life found within the Sanctuary, and it is the thread needed to weave that fabric whole. Friends of the Sea Otter understands that not everyone may share their enthusiasm for the sea otter's return home to the Channel Islands. However, they suggest that the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary provides an opportunity for those who care about sea otters and those who care about shellfisheries to come together seeking common ground.
- The population of California sea otters is in ominous decline. Should the otters' situation not improve dramatically, it may need to be reclassified from a threatened to an endangered species.
- Within the past two years, up to 150 otters have periodically moved south of Point Conception into the Santa Barbara Channel. These animals represent the only bright spot in an otherwise bleak picture for this increasingly imperiled species.
- Public Law 99-615 established a sea otter management zone south of Point Conception, but unfortunately this area appears to be one that may be critical for the recovery of this species.
- The capture and removal of otters from Southern California results in an unacceptable high mortality rate.
- We need to assist in identifying ways to help the fishermen adjust when otters do return to Southern California. We need fishermen's help in developing trap designs and modifications to insure that they can continue to fish in a manner that does not put sea otters at risk. We need to develop shellfish refugia, both within and beyond the sea otter range, to provide additional substrate for larval development and increased opportunities for human harvest of shellfish in areas where divers may compete with sea otters.
- The sea otter's return to the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary is compatible with the goals and mandate of the National Marine Sanctuary Program in several ways:
  - The return of sea otters is compatible with the Sanctuary's goal and mission of maintenance, restoration and enhancement of living resources.
  - The sea otters' return provides for interpretation and public education opportunities.
  - The sea otters' return to their native habitat provides opportunities for scientific research.
  - The sea otters' return allows for the long term protection of nationally significant resources, vital habitats and resources which generate tourism.
- Development of the Sanctuary's management plan must take into consideration the goals and objectives of the Channel Islands National Park.



### **Council questions and discussion of sea otter presentations:**

Dave Long asked if there was an evaluation of the cause of sea otter deaths. Steve Shimek stated that trauma was divided into two categories: infectious disease (mostly from worms) and toxoplasma (found in domestic cats).

Bruce Steele expressed concern about the effects of sea otters on sea urchins. He noted that sea urchins provide refuge for little organisms living under them. If otters enter the Sanctuary, the sea urchins will only be able to exist in deep cracks within the waters, but this will not be sufficient protection. Bruce also talked about habitat modification at the bottom of the ocean, and if it might be possible to exclude otters from harvesting urchins, while still allowing for commercial harvest.

Linda Krop questioned if the SAC should look at other factors involving the decline in sea otter populations. Steve responded that some of these factors could be DDT, oil wells, PCB's, etc. He believes that we should use otters as a tool to clean-up the environment.

A member of the public stated that the promises that were made during the translocation program have not been kept. According to Steve Rebock, you cannot have shellfish fisheries and sea otters. The cumulative effect on degradation in coastal waters makes the restoration of abalone impossible with sea otters. Mr. Rebock also does not believe that sea otters are a keystone species in California.

### **9. Presentation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Sea Otter Translocation Program**

Carl Benz reported that the draft biological opinion and draft evaluation of the translocation program were completed in March 1999, and distributed to over 100 stakeholders for review and comment. The comment period closed in June and all comments have been reviewed and, as appropriate, incorporated into revised drafts that are under internal review. A draft revised recovery plan is being forwarded back to the recovery team for their final review. According to Carl, this draft incorporates new information on the status of the sea otter population and will be released to the public for review and comment.

Carl also reported that in January 1999, the selection of the expanded group of technical consultants was finalized and new members were notified. A meeting is going to be held with the expanded group to explain their role relative to the recovery team and identifying alternative management actions and options. This meeting will be held after USFWS completes their internal review of the biological opinion and failure evaluation, and identify a preferred management action regarding the San Nicolas Island colony and containment.

The USFWS anticipates that they will use the NEPA process to involve stakeholders to understand the latest biological information, to identify important resource issues, and possible solutions.

Council questions and discussion of USFWS sea otter presentation followed.

## **10. Future meeting dates, locations and agenda items**

### **A. Meeting Dates:**

The Council agreed that the third Wednesday of every other month would be acceptable as a standing meeting date for the SAC. The 2000 dates and locations agreed to are:

- January 20, 2000 (Ventura)
- March 15, 2000 (Santa Barbara)
- May 17, 2000 (Lompoc)
- July 19, 2000 (Santa Barbara)
- September 20, 2000 (Ventura)
- November 15, 2000 (Santa Barbara)

The Council also agreed that the following additional 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of alternate months should be reserved for possible additional meetings (to focus on the management plan):

- February 16
- April 19
- June 21

### **B. Future Agenda Topics**

New suggestions raised for future agenda topics were:

- A half-day workshop with MERA. This might be best scheduled for May, and could possibly be combined with a Workshop on the Management Plan's Education and Outreach Program.
- A presentation by Global Photon (Marla Daily/Linda Krop), and a possible agency-based panel presentation/workshop on the Global Photon cable proposal. It was agreed that this could wait until later because the Council would prefer to first focus on the Management Plan revision process.
- GIS Presentation to the SAC by Ben Waltenberger of CINMS.
- Management Plan Revision Process. Setting aside ample time on future agendas for the SAC to work directly on the Management Plan was an agreed-upon high priority.

**The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.**

*Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by:*

Michael Murray and Mettja Hong  
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary